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Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child
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Summary record of the 2064th (Chamber A) meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 14 January 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Aldoseri

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland (CRC/C/IRL/3-4; CRC/C/IRL/Q/3-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ireland took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Patricia O'Brien** (Ireland) said that the promotion and protection of human rights had always been at the centre of Irish foreign policy. Her country attached great importance to strengthening the human rights treaty body system, which provided States with valuable expert advice, held them accountable and supported them in their efforts to promote and protect human rights domestically.

3. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the financial crisis of 2008 had deeply affected families and children in Ireland, but the Government was working to achieve progress wherever possible and to develop robust plans for the future in order to safeguard children's rights. Unemployment and poverty made it difficult for children to integrate fully in mainstream society, but good social policies that promoted children's rights would help them realize their potential and contribute to building a strong economy. To that end, the Irish Government was allocating significant resources to vital areas such as childcare, education, health, social protection and housing.

4. A number of important steps had been taken to improve the situation of children in Ireland, including the creation of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs; the recognition of children as rights holders under the Constitution; the establishment of the Child and Family Agency; and the preparation of the "Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures" policy framework. Ireland had also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

5. In order to protect the most vulnerable groups of society from the impact of the financial crisis, Ireland had focused on the delivery of child welfare and invested in quality services for children, including free preschool education, additional support for preschool children in disadvantaged areas and childcare subsidies for single parents. In addition, investments had been made in children's detention schools, in order to end the practice of detaining children in adult prisons.

6. To ensure that children's voices were heard and their best interests taken into account, Ireland had taken a number of legislative measures, including the enactment of the Children First Act, the Child Care (Amendment) Act (2015) and the International Protection Act.

7. Since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, almost 135,000 jobs had been created and the country's unemployment rate had dropped to 8.8 per cent. Ireland was now in a position to make the changes necessary to meet its obligations under the Convention and had invested in a number of priority areas in order to achieve that goal.

8. The fact that in 2014 one in nine children in Ireland lived in consistent poverty was a cause of considerable concern to the Government. In order to tackle the two major challenges of child poverty and homelessness, the Government had set a child-specific poverty target under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures to reduce the 2011 child poverty level by at least two thirds and would continue to adopt innovative approaches to ensuring that every child and every family had a home.

9. Hard work would be necessary in order to meet the objectives of the Convention. The Government would accordingly begin a comprehensive review of the Child Care

Act of 1991; advance work on developing better cross-sectoral cooperation to support those at risk of educational disadvantage; pursue a range of legislative changes related to sexual offences and victim protection, enabling ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; implement the International Protection Act; and explore the promotion of children's rights and equality under a joint project with civil society.

10. He welcomed the significant contribution of civil society and NGOs to the protection and promotion of children's rights in Ireland and commended the work of the Ombudsman for Children's Office, which was vital to achieving the objectives of the Convention.

11. **Ms. Sandberg** (Country Task Force) welcomed the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and asked when it planned to ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The recognition of children as rights holders under the Constitution was a very positive step, and she asked whether there were plans to enact legislation to ensure the application of that provision. It was regrettable that the Convention was not fully incorporated in Irish law; in particular, there was no statutory obligation for public bodies to respect the principles of the Convention in relevant administrative proceedings or decision-making processes. She asked whether there were plans to review domestic legislation in order to achieve full compliance. She also wished to know when the Children First Act and the Children and Family Relationships Act would come into force.

12. She wondered whether there was a plan of action for the implementation of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures policy framework, and whether that framework included a specific strategy to address the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller children. She asked whether children's rights were prioritized during the budgeting process and whether the impact of austerity measures on Roma and Traveller children had been measured. She noted that the State party's data collection system did not adequately cover those groups.

13. With regard to intersectoral coordination, she asked whether the Department for Children and Youth Affairs had the authority to ensure that all Government ministries respected the principles of the Convention, and she wondered how cross-cutting issues were coordinated.

14. Referring to the Committee's concluding observations of 2006, she asked whether there were plans to make the Ombudsman for Children's Office fully independent of the Department and why the Ombudsman was not authorized to receive complaints relating to asylum, immigration, naturalization and citizenship. What mechanisms were in place to address those issues? She also wondered whether judges and other professionals were specially trained in hearing children.

15. Noting that there was a lack of awareness about the Convention among public bodies and the general public, she requested more information on measures to improve that situation.

16. Lastly she noted that the State party's draft National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2016-2019 did not appear to cover children's rights or make reference to the Committee's general comment No. 16 on children's rights and the business sector. What was being done to ensure that businesses were aware of the Convention?

17. **Mr. Madi** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) asked whether an age limit was applied in cases where marriage under the age of 18 years was authorized pursuant to a Court Exception Order and in what circumstances such cases occurred. He expressed concern that, while a child was defined under the Mental Health Act and with respect

to the age of majority as a person under the age of 18 years, that definition did not apply in cases of early marriage.

18. With regard to non-discrimination, he asked whether there had been any follow-up to the National Action Plan Against Racism for 2005-2008. The fact that the vast majority of primary schools in Ireland were under the patronage of the Catholic Church posed difficulties to families who wanted their children to be educated in a multi- or non-denominational environment, and he asked whether efforts were being made to increase the number of non-denominational schools and to guarantee equal access to education for all children irrespective of their religious beliefs. Expressing concern about reports of discrimination against Roma and Traveller children, including on the part of public officials, he asked why the Government had recently rejected a motion to recognize Travellers as a minority ethnic group. He also requested more information on measures to prevent discrimination against intersex children.

19. He welcomed efforts to incorporate the principle of the best interests of the child into Irish law but noted that it was absent from the Education Act of 1998 and various administrative procedures. The State party should review its laws and judicial and administrative procedures in order to identify and address shortcomings in that regard.

20. He expressed concern about the high rate of infant mortality among Travellers and asked whether measures were being taken to addresses the various causes of death among children, in particular road accidents, and the high rate of child suicide in Ireland.

21. Lastly he asked whether there were any plans to review legislation to ensure the right of children to have their views heard.

22. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** (Country rapporteur) said that he would like to know what would happen in cases where the parents of a child born out of wedlock did not agree on the name to be given to the registered child. Had the State party legislated to protect a child's right to obtain information on his or her biological origins, particularly for children born through surrogacy and for adopted children? And was an age limit, or any other restriction, in place for children seeking such information?

23. The delegation should comment on whether mechanisms were in place to enable the parents or legal guardians of transgender children to seek recognition of a different gender from that assigned at birth, at what age children could demand recognition of a change in gender on their own initiative, whether any restrictions were in place for such children, and whether the cost of the procedure was borne by the individual or the State. He would also appreciate a comment on whether legislative oversight measures had been implemented in public and private health facilities to ensure the prohibition of surgery performed on intersex children without their consent.

24. Moreover, he wished to know whether legislation governing the right to privacy provided for public prosecutors to obtain access to files on children during legal proceedings. He wondered whether corporal punishment had been banned under all circumstances, whether awareness-raising campaigns in that regard had been launched for parents and teachers, whether Ireland had enough social workers to address all known cases of violence against children, whether children had access to a 24-hour response service in the event of their abuse, whether schools were inspected to prevent cases of bullying and how regularly inspections took place, and whether the financial crisis had impacted negatively on the funding of support shelters for child victims of violence. Finally, he asked how many trials and convictions had taken place as a result of the various commissions set up to inquire into cases of historic child abuse.

25. **Mr. Gurán** said that he would like to know whether Ireland intended to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and to lower the legal working age in order to improve the protection of children's rights.

26. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she was concerned by discrimination against boys who had engaged in sexual relations. Did a decision not to give a child born out of wedlock the name of his or her father until the child reached 18 years of age cause problems for the child with regard to schooling? Were Traveller and Roma persons able to register their child's birth, and was a child born on Irish soil entitled to Irish nationality?

27. **Mr. Nogueira Neto** said that he would appreciate clarification of whether intersex children subjected to surgery without their consent were entitled to seek compensation.

28. **Mr. Gastaud** said that he would like to know whether a child's right to privacy was appropriately protected with regard to the media and whether restrictions were placed on the media when reporting on criminal proceedings involving children. Did legislation provide for the punishment of Internet service providers that released personal information on children?

29. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) said that a Sexual Offences Bill was currently being considered by the Oireachtas (national parliament). Once adopted, it would ensure compliance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which in turn would remove any obstacles to its ratification.

30. **Mr. Keenan** (Ireland) said that, subsequent to the 2012 Children's Referendum, a number of legislative acts providing for the best interests of the child had been introduced, including the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. The Human Rights and Equality Commission was also responsible for imposing on institutions obligations pertaining to the observance of children's rights. A National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020 had been published, and significant consultation with children had taken place to inform a number of policies.

31. **Ms. O'Rourke** (Ireland) said that the Irish Constitution accepted generally recognized principles of international law, including international human rights law. However, the Constitution also stipulated that international agreements to which Ireland was a party did not become part of domestic law unless agreed upon by the Oireachtas. Consequently, the Convention on the Rights of the Child did not form part of domestic law, although the substantive rights it contained were respected under the Constitution and national legislation. The Interdepartmental Committee on Human Rights had recently been established to examine the ratification of international human rights treaties. A commission had been set up in 2013 to begin work on a project focusing on the domestic implementation of international obligations. The project would concentrate on building an inventory of effective methods of implementation.

32. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said that the Children First Act had recently been signed into law. It provided for mandatory reporting by key officials to the Child and Family Agency, comprehensive risk assessment of all services provided to children, and registration of cases of non-compliance with the law. An interdepartmental group ensured cross-sectoral implementation of the Act, and each Government department had already set out an individual roadmap to ensure compliance. One key element of the Act was the removal of the common law defence of reasonable chastisement.

33. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the removal of the common law defence of reasonable chastisement had effectively prohibited corporal punishment under all circumstances.

34. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said that the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures policy framework covered children and young people from birth to 24 years of age. The key outcomes that the framework was designed to achieve were linked to specific United Nations principles, and the articles of the Convention were embedded in the framework itself. An implementation plan had been developed and the Government had produced its first annual report in that regard. All 163 commitments contained in the framework had been developed in collaboration with civil society.

35. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs gave input into policy and legislation pertaining to children's rights. A participation strategy was in place to allow children to voice their opinions on issues of importance to them, and cabinet ministers consulted with children regarding children's rights. Moreover, the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy met regularly and reviewed all Government policy memoranda.

36. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) said that the provisions relating to guardianship, custody and access in the Children and Family Relationships Act would take effect in a matter of days. A tripartite consultation process was under way to put in place a strategy for the inclusion of Traveller and Roma persons. The Government was conducting an assessment of the needs of the Roma community, in collaboration with relevant NGOs and trained field researchers from the Roma community itself. A paper on disaggregated data on Traveller and Roma persons had been submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, focusing on how to ensure that such data were available while respecting data protection laws.

37. **Mr. Walsh** (Ireland) said that, following the end of the financial crisis, the Government was in a position to allocate additional resources to compensate for measures taken during the crisis. The Government was strongly committed to maintaining a basic level of social protection for children; it had ensured that the level of social protection should never be less than one third of the rate of protection for adults. Following reductions in universal benefits for children in 2010 and 2013, the money saved had been redirected to early childhood programmes and after-school childcare. The Government had also restored the additional bonus for families on welfare and introduced the back-to-work family dividend to help families move from welfare. Ireland had a strong culture of consulting NGOs on proposals for budgetary policies and priorities. Moreover, it had adopted an analytical measure called social impact assessment, an evidence-based methodology that evaluated the effects of policy proposals on income and social inequality, including child poverty. The results of such research were published before and after each budget, and it had been found that there had been a 2 per cent increase in the income of households with children.

38. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the magnitude of what the country had undergone should not be understated. Out of the 2 million people in work before the financial crisis, 330,000 had lost their jobs and had had to be supported by the State. The Government believed that the best way out of poverty was a job, so it encouraged employment. Indeed, that was the rationale for increasing spending on childcare. The aim was to protect the most vulnerable after the cuts that had had to be made to many critical services.

39. The problem of unallocated social work cases had bedevilled Ireland for decades. He had therefore requested the Child and Family Agency to carry out an audit and produce a business plan for the next three years. The Agency had done so, and it had received a large increase in its funding in order to enable it to address the

problem. As more money became available, the Government would seek to do more to alleviate child poverty, which it considered to be a priority.

40. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said that the Government had embarked on setting up a system to track all Government expenditure on children. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs had a strong research and evaluation unit, which was undertaking a national study that tracked the lives of 20,000 children. On the basis of the results, a strategy could be established.

41. **Mr. Keenan** (Ireland) said that the Ombudsman for Children's Office was entirely independent. The fact that its funding was provided by the Ministry for Children and Youth Affairs did not impinge on its activities.

42. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) added that, under Irish law, the parliament could not vote money for an institution unless a minister took responsibility for a request for funding. The fact that funds could not be granted directly by the parliament did not, however, compromise an institution's independence.

43. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the same applied to the Health Information and Quality Authority, which was funded by the Department of Health. Like the Ombusdman's for Children's Office, its activities were entirely independent.

44. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland), replying to a question about complaints by migrants, said that a complaints procedure had always been in place, but an independent appeals officer had been appointed in 2015. Complaints were best resolved locally, however; mediation was better than adjudication. The Reception and Integration Agency therefore paid unannounced visits to reception centres and heard complaints — largely relating to food and accommodation — on the spot. It had never been intended for people to stay so long in reception centres. The International Protection Act would be crucial to improving the situation. In reply to a question from **Ms. Sandberg**, he said that the appeals officer was a judge who also had other appeal functions.

45. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said, with regard to dissemination of the Convention, that, under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002, the Ombudsman was required to promote public awareness of the Convention. The current Ombudsman was extremely active in that regard. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention was to be marked with a major public event. Much of the Convention was already embedded in Government policy.

46. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) said that the judiciary in Ireland was independent and, as an official of the Department of Justice and Equality, he could not speak for the judges. Training was facilitated by the Committee for Judicial Studies, which had provided him with a list of the courses attended by judges on child-related issues. Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were welcome to look at the list.

47. Every effort was made to ensure that child victims or witnesses were comfortable in court. Court officials were dressed more informally than in other courts and video links were available. The best interests of the child were always paramount. The proposed establishment of a family law court would take the process a step further forward.

48. **Mr. Wrafter** (Ireland) said, in relation to a question about general comment No. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, that public procurement in Ireland was governed by domestic and European Union law, and specifically by article 18 of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement. Equal treatment, non-discrimination, transparency, mutual recognition, proportionality and the free movement of goods must be observed in all tenders.

49. The process of drawing up a national plan on business and human rights had begun with the convening of a forum in 2014, at which NGOs, academics and officials had exchanged views and discussed best practices. The result of the forum was a working outline for a national plan — which could be found on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade — rather than a draft, since much work remained to be done to perfect the text. The aim was to provide a practical toolkit giving guidance to public and private entities on children's rights.

50. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) said that the anomaly regarding the age of marriage, mentioned by Mr. Madi, was indeed worrying. The intention was to repeal the relevant provision before the end of 2016.

51. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said that there were very few such cases in Ireland — between 20 and 30 a year — and they were always subject to individual consideration by a judge.

52. **Mr. O'Briain** (Ireland) said that, although Ireland had had no national action plan against racism since 2008, all the relevant activities were still undertaken. Most importantly, the Refugee Integration Agency was in place, with the funding required to interact with local authorities. However, a new integration strategy was currently being finalized and would be launched shortly.

53. With regard to the question of the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group, discussions had been held with Traveller organizations about what they required and a statement had been agreed. Before the statement could be issued, however, it had had to be established that there were no implications for public expenditure or legal obligations. Another difficulty had been to establish the difference between a "national minority" and an "ethnic group". The statement had in fact been absorbed into a broader process of putting a new strategy in place, one aspect of which was Travellers' cultural heritage and identity.

54. **Mr. Reilly** (Ireland) said that the Equal Status Act and the Employment Equality Act covered the Traveller community, as they covered everyone else.

55. With regard to patronage of schools, it should be no surprise that there was a preponderance of denominational schools — 95 per cent in the primary sector and 70 per cent in the secondary sector — given that schools had evolved from religious orders. It was, however, a matter for concern that the situation of patronage was lagging behind the actual state of society, contrary to the principle of the separation of church and State. The process of moving to greater pluralism was slow. The Minister of Education and Skills had said that she would repeal a provision in a law of 1965, which stated that religious education was the most important element of education in primary schools. Some progress had been made, however. One school in his constituency had 81 different nationalities among its pupils.

56. **Mr. Madi** said that the Committee had never doubted the State party's intentions. The problem was implementation. Most people wished to find a non-denominational school for their children but failed to do so. He noted that in many schools religious education formed part of the curriculum. Children who did not participate in such education would surely face problems.

57. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she had not heard a reply to her question on the discrimination faced by boys for having engaged in sexual intercourse and asked what was done to prevent the stigmatization of girls. She wished to know whether there were plans to decriminalize abortion, whether the practice was prohibited on religious grounds and what support was offered to women and girls who could not afford to travel abroad for the procedure.

58. **Ms. Caitríona O'Brien** (Ireland) said that the rate of change brought about by the ongoing patronage divesting process was slow, but that the Minister for Education and Skills was endeavouring to expedite the process by holding meetings with major stakeholders, whose active involvement was considered to be of particular importance.

59. The purpose of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, which had been published in April 2015, was to ensure that the framework for enrolment decisions was more structured, fair and transparent. The Bill required schools to state explicitly in their admissions policy that they would not discriminate against applicants by reason of, inter alia, disability, sexual orientation or religion, and provided that denominational and single-sex schools should specify the exemptions applicable to them. The Bill also provided that the Child and Family Agency should allocate a school place to children who had been unable to secure one, that the National Council for Special Education should perform the same duty for children with special educational needs, and that schools should be prohibited from charging parents for applying for a place. The draft regulations that had been published in conjunction with the Bill precluded schools from prioritizing applicants on the basis of waiting lists.

60. Under the Constitution and the Education Act, children were entitled to opt out of religious education classes. While the practical arrangements that had to be made in such cases were currently a matter for individual schools, the Bill stipulated that school enrolment policies should contain clear provisions in that regard. To conclude, it was hoped that the Bill would help the education system adapt to recent demographic changes in Ireland.

61. **Ms. Canavan** (Ireland) said that children of 16 and 17 years of age could apply to the courts for recognition of their preferred gender, provided that they had parental consent and were supported by medical opinion. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs was engaged in a collaborative consultation process with children and young people to determine what amendments, if any, were needed to relevant legislation in order to guarantee respect for the best interests of children, including those under 16 years of age.

62. **Ms. Sandberg**, noting the lack of provision for paternity leave in employment law and that the maximum length of maternity leave was below the European Union average, asked whether there were plans to improve the situation. What steps were envisaged to enhance the accessibility of early childhood education, particularly for low-income families, and did the Government intend to develop a national strategy for the prevention of child abuse?

63. The delegation should comment on reports of delays in taking children into care from harmful family environments and describe the follow-up given to recommendations made by the Ombudsman for Children with regard to the provision of services in care. The delegation should also explain what was being done about the high turnover of social workers and the fact that 9 per cent of children in care had not been assigned one. She wished to know why statutory and non-statutory children's residential centres were inspected by two separate bodies and whether there was any difference in the quality of the monitoring conducted.

64. She would appreciate a response to reports of inadequate coordination between child protection, mental health and disability services, of poor conditions and inappropriate use of isolation in special care units, that children for whom secure facilities were necessary were sent abroad and that some categories of children were not eligible to receive aftercare. She would also welcome information on the enactment of legislation to facilitate the adoption of foster children, on step-parent adoption, for which the process was allegedly very complicated, and on the assistance given to the children of priests in finding out the identity of their biological parents.

65. Noting that more could be done to encourage the training of judges, particularly through the provision of sufficient resources, she asked whether plans to establish a family court system were under way and whether judicial mediation schemes had been put in place. She also invited the delegation to comment on reports that the Children and Family Relationships Act did not provide for children to be heard in family law cases. As a result, the matter was left to the discretion of judges, whose refusal to hear children had an impact that was often exacerbated by a lack of adequate court services.

66. She asked whether a child poverty reduction plan had been drafted and whether a rights-based approach would be adopted in its implementation. According to alternative sources, some mechanisms to alleviate poverty, such as the school meals programme, were limited in scope and insufficiently funded.

67. Given the alleged poor quality of the emergency housing made available to children and their families in response to the housing shortage crisis, she asked what steps were being taken to find a more permanent solution. The delegation should also comment on the Government's apparent reluctance to provide the Traveller community with culturally appropriate accommodation.

68. She would welcome the delegation's thoughts on complaints from children that the Leaving Certificate examination was too broad and that its focus was on knowledge rather than understanding. She requested a time frame for the enactment of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill and further details on the functioning of student councils. She also noted that religious education was included in the study programmes of other subjects, that the right to be heard in educational settings was not enshrined in the Education Act and that some complaints mechanisms in the education sector were incomplete.

69. With regard to sport and leisure, the delegation should comment on requests from children for physical education classes to be more varied and less competitive, and on complaints from adolescents of a lack of affordable leisure activities and that the police harassed them instead of protecting them.

70. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether any specific measures or plans were in place to meet the health needs of children living in poverty, whether any policies had been adopted to promote breastfeeding and, if so, what results had been achieved, particularly in terms of increasing the number of baby-friendly hospitals.

71. He requested information on efforts to enhance the accessibility of childhood obesity programmes and to promote physical education not only as a pastime but also as a means of staying healthy. He also asked whether and how the Government fostered inclusive education and what public policies had been introduced to support children with disabilities.

72. **Mr. Madi** enquired about the status of the International Protection Act and of the legislative proposals of March 2015 to establish a protection system. He asked whether the Government intended to formulate legislative proposals on immigration and residency, and called on it to ensure that any such proposals were in line with the Committee's general comment No. 6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin.

73. He invited the delegation to comment on reports that children in the Direct Provision system spent as long as eight years there, and he called on the State party to raise the children's weekly allowance, which remained low despite a recent increase. He asked what follow-up had been given to the 173 recommendations put forward by the Working Group on the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports for Asylum Seekers, and noted that the high number of recommendations spoke for

itself. The Committee had not received a response to its request for information on measures to ensure that unaccompanied minors in an irregular migration situation were not left stateless or in a situation of legal ambiguity with regard to their migration status on attaining the age of majority. He also emphasized the importance of regular, independent inspections of Direct Provision centres. He noted with concern that implementing legislation for the International Protection Act had not yet been enacted, resulting in the continued absence of a comprehensive framework to address the problems of migrant children, and that not enough had been done to ensure that migrant children in an irregular situation received independent legal advice.

74. Turning to the issue of minority groups, he wished to know whether the Government had assessed the support needs of the Roma community, in accordance with a recommendation contained in the Logan report of July 2014, why the Government's housing budget for the Traveller community had been reduced by around 90 per cent between 2008 and 2015, and why that budget often went unspent.

75. The delegation should describe the measures taken to prevent children from being used in drug production and trafficking, and to protect and rehabilitate child victims of trafficking. It should also provide an update on efforts to develop the juvenile detention facilities at Oberstown.

76. Lastly, he asked what had been done to ensure that child detention schools met national quality standards and noted with concern that the age of criminal responsibility was still set at 10 years for serious crimes.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.